

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 5557
March 7, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, distinguished members of the Education Committee,

My name is Sonia Spencer. I am writing on behalf of my Teachers, Teacher's Assistants, and Director of Lovable Angels Childcare Learning Center located in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

I am testifying in support of House Bill 5557. Early childhood teachers in state-funded programs are grossly underpaid, while at the same time, facing increasing education requirements. Early childhood teacher wages in state-funded programs are inevitably low because state reimbursement rates are low. Early Childhood Education Teachers/Directors are expected to fulfill high standards set by NAEYC Accreditation & the Board of Education in order to meet the state learning requirements. These staff work tirelessly to address each child's educational and safety needs. Teachers with their Associate's or Bachelor's degree enter the field starting at \$12.00 and \$13.00 dollars an hour with little opportunity for growth in their wages such as Directors who only earn \$14.00 dollars an hour. Furthermore, the teachers come to school every day ready to take on the many challenges that occur while educating three and four year olds. The teachers give individualized attention required for the children's growth and learning. We expect them to do assessments and make referrals to appropriate providers in addition to providing support to parents in order to collaborate on the goals set for each child.

These numerous responsibilities required of teachers, need to be compensated appropriately, and show early childhood education staff that they are valuable contributors to the overall success of each child's educational career. It is important to note that without the start of a preschool education, children will not be prepared for Kindergarten; studies have shown that early childhood education plays an important role in the developmental stages of young children. It is time that we look at Early Childhood Education as an asset to young children; and not as baby sitting. A curriculum has been develop which help the children to be prepared and ready for the Kindergarten curriculum.

I urge you to take action to raise wages for early childhood education. The work our teachers do is very important. High quality preschool education gives each child a better chance to succeed in higher education.

It's time for our teachers to be paid for the work they have been doing, they are been held to a higher standard, they are the beginning in getting children an early head start.